

School Crisis Preparedness – Doing your best to prepare for the worst

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David J Schonfeld, MD
Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Child Study,
Yale University School of Medicine
Coordinator, School Crisis Response Initiative
National Center for Children Exposed to Violence
www.nccev.org (School Crisis Response Initiative)
david.schonfeld@yale.edu

Preparedness Phase

- Identifying likely needs and available resources
- Developing protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
- Training personnel

School Crisis Response Initiative

National Center for Children Exposed to Violence

- Established 1991
- Collaboration of:
 - Yale Child Study Center and community mental health professionals
 - Law enforcement representatives
 - Local and state educational agencies
- To develop capacity to meet students' and staff's safety and mental health needs at times of crisis
- To provide technical assistance in crisis situations

Importance of Data

- Needs identified during preventive efforts
- Local/unique vulnerabilities or needs
- Perceived needs of stakeholders
- Resources
 - Crisis plans
 - Physical resources/equipment
 - Personnel
 - Community resources

Components of Preparedness

- Organizational model – coordinated and comprehensive; flexible and adaptable
- Plan should address safety and security, dissemination of information, and attention to emotional impact
- Plan for, and respond to, common events
- Outline protocols for generic event, as well as modifications to unique situations

Examples of SOPs (Milford Public Schools)

- Immediate Response Involving First Responders
- Activation Central Office Crisis Team
- Building Evacuation
 - Emergency Evacuation Plan for Person Requiring Special Accommodations
 - Bomb Threat Checklist
- Lockdown
- Lockout (including reverse evacuation)
- Shelter-in-Place
- Bus Accident
- Others (e.g., Suspicious Powder)

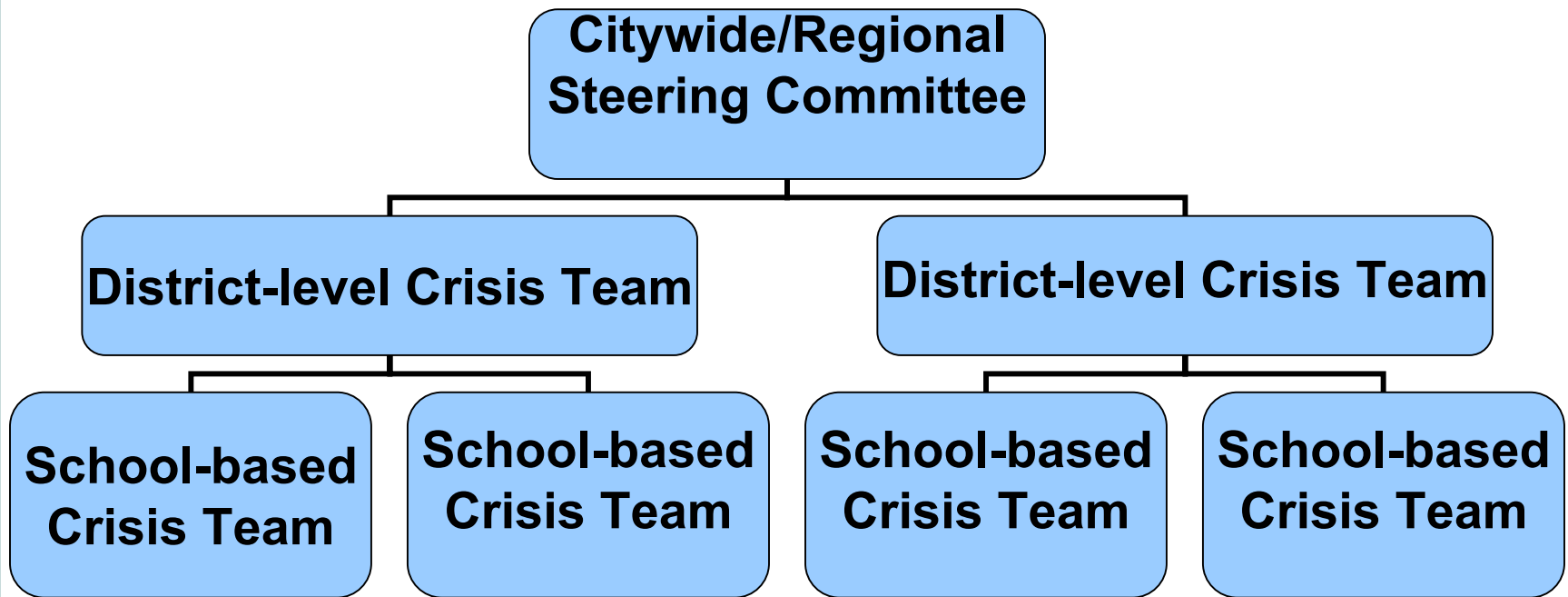
Components of Preparedness (con't)

- Simple changes may be important and not require major resources
- Relationships are important
- Myth – “It’s just a matter of communication”
- Community-school partnerships
- Benefit of team approach

Training and Dissemination

- Presentations
- Tabletop exercises
- Drills
- Information to all staff
 - Manual, flipchart, targeted materials
 - Avoid codes
- Information to parents

Hierarchical Approach



Crisis Team Roles

- Crisis Team Chair
- Assistant Chair
- Media Coordinator
- Staff Notification Coordinator
- Communications Coordinator
- Crowd Management Coordinator
- Counseling Coordinator

Crisis Team Chair

- Moderates process of each team meeting
- Mediates any conflicts that may arise
- Oversees the broad and specific functioning of the team
- Primary contact for agencies outside of school (police, fire rescue, central or district office, etc.)

Assistant Team Chair

- Assists, and serves as a substitute in the absence of the Chair
- Records the minutes/decisions of the crisis team
- Ensures that the necessary logistical supports are in place to meet the operational needs of crisis team members
- Follows up with crisis team and classroom staff to assess the resource needs among students and staff

Media Coordinator

- Sole contact person for all media inquiries
- Prepares statements to staff, students, and parents; a brief press release; and a notice that can be read
- Works in conjunction with the media coordinator for the school district

Staff Notification Coordinator

- Establishes, coordinates, and initiates the telephone tree
- Develops in-house communication plan for notification during the school day
- Evaluates information needs of staff and collaborates with media and communication coordinators

Communications Coordinator

- Oversees all direct, in-house communications
- Proactively identifies solutions to communication problems
- Logs official communications (calls in/out) and makes available for dissemination copies of announcements, information, etc.

Crowd Management Coordinator

- Supervises or provides advice to first responders on the movement of students and staff during, and in, the aftermath of a crisis event
- Identifies any vulnerabilities related to the physical plant

Counseling Coordinator

- Oversees preparation of classroom staff & supervision of counseling staff activities
- Determines the extent and nature of need for counseling services
- Develops and oversees triage for support rooms; directs services in support rooms
- Provides liaison with external mental health agencies
- Need for staff support

Adaptations to Crisis Team Roles

- Roles may be shared (e.g., Crowd Management Coordinator shared by custodian & school resource officer)
- One member may be responsible for >1 role (e.g., combine roles of Communications Coordinator and Staff Notification Coordinator)
- Alternates available for each role
- Adapt structure to fit needs; standardize across system
- Ensure all tasks and responsibilities are covered

Evaluation, Exercises and Drills

- Test with ongoing exercises and drills
 - Use what you learn to rework plan and guide professional development of team members
- *Preparedness is not an outcome – it is a process – and data and evaluation should inform the process*